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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000990

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/RSP/TC
PLEASE PASS TO AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2015

TAGS: [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [TW](#) [ESTH](#)

SUBJECT: AIT TELLS TAIWAN CDC ABOUT WHO/IHR

REF: A. MESERVE-PAAL E-MAIL OF 2/23

[B](#). 2005 TAIPEI 00860

[C](#). 2003 TAIPEI 02575

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas H. Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (c) Summary. AIT delivered World Health Organization/International Health Regulation (WHO/IHR) points contained in refs A and B to Taiwan Center for Disease Control (TCDC) Director-General Steven Kuo on Friday, March [4](#). While Kuo was unaware of the compromise to allow for Taiwan's participation in the IHR process, he welcomed the development as a positive turn of events and thanked AIT for bringing them to his attention. Kuo also updated AIT on Influenza, AIDS and TB issues in Taiwan and informed AIT of his request for USCDC to send an advisor to TCDC. End Summary.

WHO

[1](#)2. (c) Econ Chief (accompanied by ESTOFF) delivered WHO/IHR points contained in ref A to TCDC Director-General Steven Kuo on March 4. The points used were the same as those delivered to MOFA International Organizations Director-General John Chen on February 24 (reported in ref B). Mr. Kuo thanked AIT for sharing the points and for U.S. assistance in working out a compromise to allow for Taiwan's participation in the IHR process. Kuo confirmed that the same points had been delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that AIT would want him to brief the Department of Health Minister on the visit. Despite the fact that the next step of the agreement is for the WHO to contact Taiwan about an exchange of letters, it was evident that this was the first Kuo had heard of the compromise. In fact, Kuo was notably surprised that Taiwan had agreed. He stated that the compromise sounded very similar to the "four point" proposal Beijing had offered last year, which Taiwan had found unacceptable. Nonetheless, Kuo welcomed the compromise as a major and very positive change in direction on this issue.

Flu

[1](#)3. (c) ESTOFF also took the opportunity to raise questions about recent media reports regarding several influenza deaths involving Taiwan residents 24 years old and younger. Kuo indicated that the increased media attention to influenza did not indicate a significant worsening of the problem from prior years. Instead, the increased media attention was being fed by TCDC as part of an effort to maintain the political will to fulfill Taiwan's goals to both fund its pandemic influenza preparation plans and to fund the manufacturing of vaccines in Taiwan. It also has been used as a method to publicize Taiwan's significant advancements in flu research. Taiwan is now able to test and identify exactly what types of influenza strains are affecting the population (data that will be beneficial to Taiwan in manufacturing vaccines). With this new capability, Taiwan has learned that many of its influenza deaths have been caused by the Hong Kong B strain of influenza. Because the Hong Kong B strain is typically quite mild, the strain was not included in this year's vaccinations. As a result, even people who have received flu vaccines are vulnerable.

HIV/AIDS

[1](#)4. (c) ESTOFF asked for further information on media reports about a recent rapid rise in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Taiwan. Kuo informed AIT that there has been a 76 percent increase in HIV/AIDS cases from last year (an additional 1,700 cases) and he expected another 50 percent increase this year. He confirmed that the increase was largely among IV drug users in the prison population. He revealed that part of the problem is due to TCDC's inability to influence policies across government agencies. He noted that there is currently a law, which prohibits prisons from putting people with HIV/AIDS in jail. As a result, many convicted criminals with HIV/AIDS are sent back to their communities. He claims that this is a problem that is being worked on, but that will likely take time to resolve.

TB

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15. (sbu) Kuo also brought up Taiwan,s recent decision to use World TB Day (March 24) to announce a new campaign to cut Taiwan,s exceptionally high rate of TB (see ref D) in half within 10 years. He informed AIT that former TCDC Director General Su Yi-ren has agreed to be TCDC's TB advisor. He thanked AIT for its significant role in making this issue a priority by continually raising the issue with health officials in Taiwan.

TCDC/USCDC

16. (u) Kuo told AIT that he has made it a priority to maintain the extremely positive cooperation between TCDC and US Centers for Disease Control (USCDC) established during SARS. To this end, he has sent a letter to USCDC requesting that USCDC Associate Director for Global Health, Dr. Michael Mallison be assigned to Taiwan to serve as an advisor to Kuo, although he did not explain how this might be arranged. Dr. Mallison assisted Taiwan decades ago in addressing a polio epidemic. Since that time, Dr. Mallison has assisted Taiwan with epidemiological training programs. AIT also greatly benefited from the outstanding cooperation between the two CDCs during Taiwan,s SARS outbreak and welcomes continued positive collaboration between the two sides.

PAAL